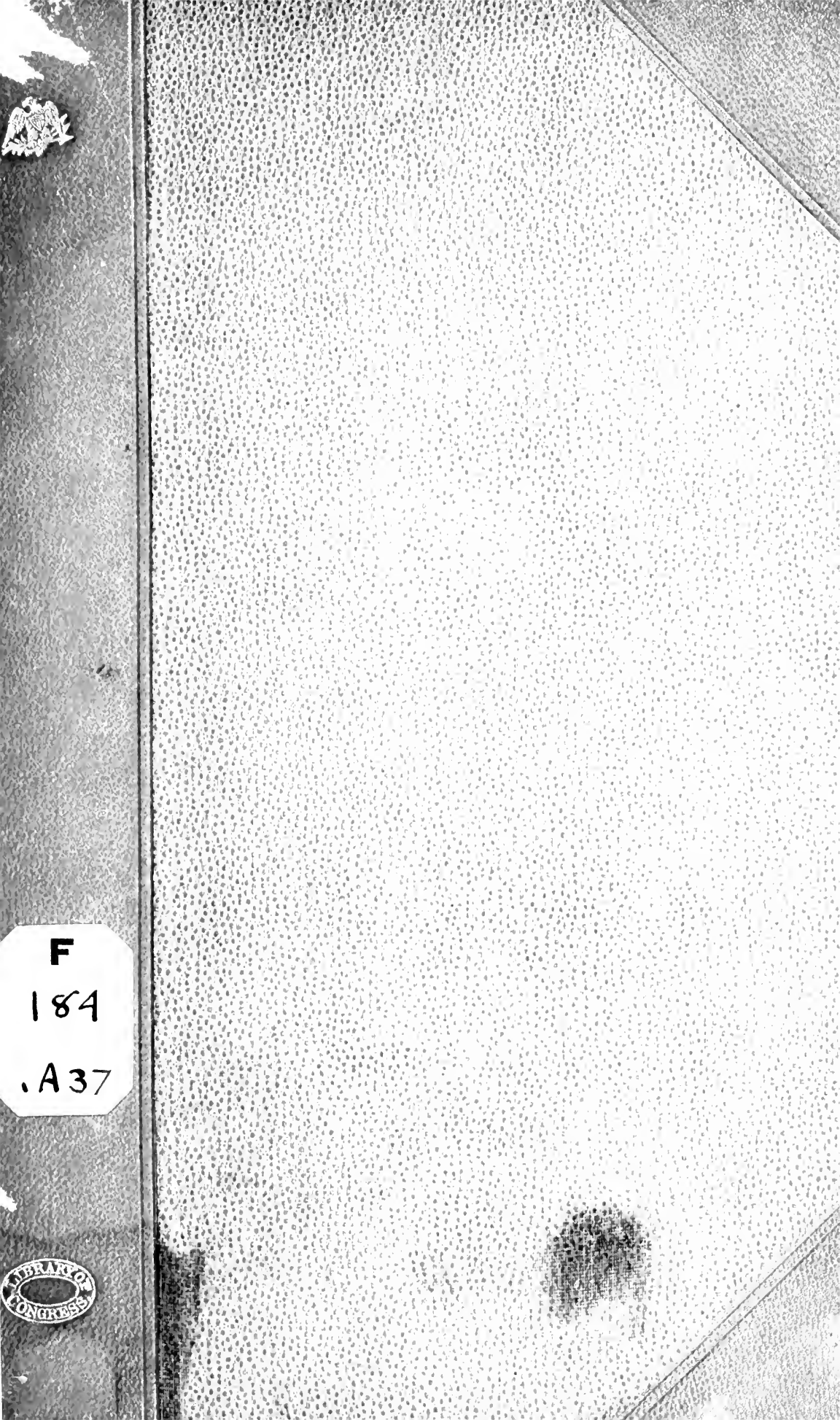
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

REPORT

on certain documents touching the

PROVINCIAL HISTORY

OF

MARYLAND:

ADDRESSED TO

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.

BALTIMORE:
PRINTED BY JOHN D. TOY.

1860.

Legentium plerisque, primæ Origines proximaque Originibus minus præbitura voluptatis sunt, festinantibus ad hæc nova quibus jampridem prævalentis Populi vires se ipsæ conficiunt. Tametsi hoc illud est præcipue salubre et frugiferum, omnis te exempli Documenta in illustri posita monimento intueri; inde tibi tuæque Reipublicæ, quod imitere, capias; inde, fœdum inceptu, fœdum exitu, quod vites.

HIS EXCELLENCY

THOMAS HOLLIDAY HICKS,

GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND.

Sir,

I have the honor herewith to make Report of the Commission, as Agent of the State, under an Act of the General Assembly of Maryland, passed at Jan. Sess. 1858, ch. 27; with which your Excellency was pleased to charge me.

The documents relating to this, only reached me after I had been for some time at Rome—one of the places indicated in the Act aforesaid; and when, in fact, my arrangements for departure had been already made. This was of the less moment, since some of the manuscript papers contemplated by the Act—and especially the Journal of Father White, (who accompanied the first of the Colonists of Lord Baltimore,) expressly referred to in a former Resolution of the General Assembly, (Dec. Sess. 1836, No. 56,) of which the Act in question was, among other things, a revival—had been otherwise acquired. A copy of this Journal, as well as of some letters relating to Jesuit Missions in Maryland, are in possession of the Historical Society at Baltimore; having been derived from the collection of the College of the Order at Georgetown, D. C., either directly or through the liberality of individuals.

The only other Document, of whose existence at Rome I had any memorandum, was a manuscript Vocabulary of the language of the Linni Lenapé, that great Indian Tribe better known to Europeans under the appellation of Delawares, families of which were in occupation of the territory of Maryland at the time of the earliest Colonists'

arrival. This, I had been informed many years ago by the Rev. Mr. McSherry, Provincial of the Jesuits in Maryland and perhaps elsewhere, was to be found among the archives of the Congregation (or Committee) in the Collegio Urbano or, as it is commonly termed, the College of the Propaganda; and it was one of the objects, though not mentioned expressly, of the Resolution aforesaid, whose introduction had been originally suggested by myself with a view to this very thing.

I made a point, then, of remaining sufficiently long in Rome to explain to His Eminence, Cardinal Barnabò, the acting Prefect of the Propaganda—a letter introductory to whom had been courteously transmitted to me by the Most Rev. the Archbishop of Baltimore—the interest attaching to the object of my research; and of obtaining permission to examine the Archives for the purpose.

In point of fact, a similar examination had previously taken place, on an application made, at my private instance, by His Excellency Mr. Cass, the United States Minister Resident at the Pontifical Court; any request from whom, the Rector of the College emphatically stated to me, deserved and would meet with the promptest and utmost attention.

I learned, on my arrival at Rome, the fruitlessness of the search which had been then instituted; but as this might have been owing to an obscure indication of the Document sought for, or to want of familiarity with the matter by those who conducted the search, I did not hesitate to gratify the interest I felt, by devoting the time necessary to satisfy myself; and I spent, therefore, besides what had been taken up in the preliminary visits mentioned and in two ineffectual ones to Msgr. Bedini, titular Archbishop of Thebes and Secretary to the Congregation of the Propaganda, an entire morning in exploring the places where the Archives were kept.

The papers here are not arranged with the precision and sort of classification that their number and variety appear to deserve, and that would be very desirable for any one attempting to gain a knowledge of their contents; nor is there any list even—at least known to the Archivist who accompanied me (who, however, I believe was not the regular official)—of the names of Missionaries, indicating where their labors had been bestowed; such as, in the absence of a strict geographical distribution of matters, would considerably economize an examiner's time. I found two or three references to Maryland among the papers

I looked over, but none of any importance; and as to the special manuscript sought for, I came reluctantly to the conclusion that it does not exist there.

Mr. Cass had already followed up a suggestion that it might have been transferred along with some other things to the Vatican, and another, that it might even be at Bologna; but with the same ill-success.

And in order to omit nothing, I procured through Father Angelo Secchi, the illustrious Astronomer and Director of the Observatory at Rome, access to the Jesuits' Convent—the principal Seat of the Order; and learned there from the Archivist that recent examinations with a view to certain re-arrangements of papers, authorized him to affirm with certainty the non-existence there of a Document like the one in question.

I regret this termination very sincerely; not only on account of the wasted time and effort in reaching it, but also because it takes away the hope I had for a long while cherished, of a valuable addition to Philology as well as to our scanty knowledge about our immediate predecessors in the territory we occupy.

The other aim of the Act—to obtain documents from the State Paper Office and Sion College in London—is capable of a more satisfactory and complete attainment. And the manuscript Library of the British Museum, not enumerated among the resorts of the Act, contains also matter of historical interest, not to be found in either of the other repositories. But so full is the former of the two, that I am inclined to think a History of Provincial Maryland may be composed upon the materials it contains, quite as exact as (and probably more faithful than) co-temporaneous history, had it been attempted.

The contents of Sion College, in this respect, are not very copious; and none of the manuscripts are of older date than the seventeenth century. But as some of them are very interesting and are to be found no where else, I devoted the time necessary, not only for their complete perquisition, but also for making out (what did not exist before) a Calendar, i. e. an Index of the title with brief notices of the contents of each paper. A copy of this Calendar I caused to be made and presented to the College, as a return for the courtesy which had

allowed me to compile the original. And I also had a transcript made, and brought it away with me, of some of the Documents; as well because of their intrinsic interest as well for the purpose of experimenting on and establishing a reliable resort for future transcription there. These and also some others which, from the same motives and in a similar manner, I procured from the State Paper Office, are ready to be deposited in the State Library.

The collections of this latter repository—the State Paper Office—are, as might be anticipated, much more extensive. The portions relating to Maryland constitute the entire mass of nine Record-folio volumes, in which the originals (and in some instances, copies) have been bound, not always with entire chronological accuracy; and form besides a greater or less part of one hundred and eighty-five similar volumes, in which they have been mixed in with similar Documents from other Plantations and Proprietaryships. Fifty-eight other bundles of sheets, spread out as if ready for binding, but not fastened together nor arranged according to any system, and endorsed America and West Indies—contain, under various titles of Maryland, Governors, Orders in Council, Proprietaries, Plantations, Memorandums, etc. Documents relating to Maryland. Such Documents are quite numerous in some of the bundles I examined; and they are probably mingled in all.

An accidental connection that I had with the Foreign Office, allowing me to communicate directly, and not as usual through the medium of the Legation at London, procured me larger facilities than ordinary; and, in particular, opened the Documents subsequent to 1688, (which are only accessible by special permission); besides giving the privilege of taking copies, from time to time, of such papers as I might desire. Of this last privilege, I have availed as yet only to a small extent and with the prospective aim I just spoke of.

For the Maryland Historical Society possesses a voluminous manuscript Calendar, presented to it by Mr. Peabody, formerly of Baltimore, but now resident in London; which is presumed to indicate all the Documents in the State Paper Office; and the verification of which appeared to me to be the first step proper to be taken. I therefore spent more days than I had anticipated would be necessary, in calendaring the contents of sundry of the volumes and bundles taken at random; to be afterwards compared with the titles in the Society's Library: and I should have continued further, had I not at last met

with a party, now holding an official station of trust in the State Paper Office, by whom or under whose direction, then in another capacity, the Peabody Calendar had been made out, and from whom I received such assurances as satisfied me that the List was accurate and complete. I have besides compared my own titling with the other; and find no discrepancies greater than what might be expected in Indexes of the same matter, constructed by different persons.

We may assume, then, that we know now what is to be found in the State Paper Office.

Next, we have ourselves in the State Library, the Council Chamber, and probably the Archives of the Court of Appeals, a considerable mass of State Papers; some or all of which are identical with those in Great Britain, and copies of which, therefore, are not needed. The second step, then, has been to cause to be made out a Calendar of what we already possess in this respect.

Upon receiving through the Secretary of State your Excellency's approval of this step, I caused it to be entered upon; and engaged the Rev. Dr. Allen, whose private Historical researches had made him more familiar than any other person with the Documents in question, to compile such a Calendar. His work is partly completed, and a Volume is presented along with this Report; indicating, document by document, the contents of all the historical Records which he has been able to find in the Council Chamber, Land Office and State Library, as well as of three volumes in the temporary possession of the Historical Society at Baltimore. The archives of the Court of Appeals are yet unexplored by him, as well as some other possible accidental places of deposit in the State House.

We may, however, assume in the second place that we shortly shall know, and have a written List of, what exists in our own Repositories.

The comparison of this List with that of the Office in London will enable us to make out a third, which will indicate our deficiencies and allow us to designate precisely the particular Documents to be copied.

If the interest felt in the subject by the Legislature of the State, having control of the necessary funds, should be equal to my own or that of a good many other persons; or if it should amount only to the conviction that Maryland herself should possess a complete collection,

original or transcribed, of all existing Documents relating to her own past History, or at least as complete a collection as is possessed by any other parties; of course the best thing, after ascertaining our deficiencies, would be to order them to be supplied, and to take measures accordingly.

In that event, the provisional arrangements which I have made in London, are adequate; and an appropriation by the Legislature of $500 per annum for the next two years, with the balance of the existing appropriation, (two-fifths of which only have been used,) would be sufficient to be expended judiciously until the next Session.

If such an appropriation be made and the disposition of it left to my control, I should advise the application of a portion of the existing balance to the preservation and arrangement of the papers we already have.

The condition of these papers, I am sorry to say, is not at all creditable to the pride which we may justly have in our antecedents, nor is it in accordance with the estimate of value which the general sense of mankind places upon authentic Historical documents; and I, for one, would very cheerfully contribute money, (were it becoming,) as I am now contributing time and valuable labor, to remove the reproach which otherwise will be justly brought against us by succeeding generations.

Thirty years ago, or just about the lifetime of one generation, the mass of such Documents in our possession was considerably larger than I have reason to believe it is now; and if we do not arrest the atmospheric decay to which parts of that mass have always been and still are liable, as well as the more active destruction of material which apparent carelessness is always sure to engender and real neglect to encourage, we are likely, in another generation, to have little left besides regret at wasted opportunities.

At the epoch I speak of, viz. 1826–27, I was myself familiar with portions of these Documents, three large boxes of which were deposited in the wood-house of the Treasury Office; and I used to employ my spare time in examining and arranging them chronologically. A genial interest was created among those then in authority at the exposition; and I flattered myself that the very unpretending plan I had formed would be systematically prosecuted to completion. But the sympathy which I had solicited for it in the beginning, soon outran my anticipations; more magnificent and doubtlessly more suitable ideas were enter-

tained; until the estimate of $5,000, stipulated for by an eminent judicial functionary, who contemplated their execution, effectually stopped, (as I dare say it would now,) any farther progress. I do not disguise, and need hardly be excused for the disappointment I felt, or for subsequently leaving these unhappy papers to their fate; as some of them, I have no doubt, met in being used for kindling material.

The effort was, however, though abortive, not entirely fruitless; for mainly out of or along with it, grew in the next year the establishment of the present State Library; to which the papers in question were shortly removed. What they underwent there, I had not the means of knowing; some examinations, I was told, were made and certain Documents were copied into a Book or Books which I have seen; but, under peculiar impressions entertained by the copyist, after transcription, the originals were destroyed. And this is another of the processes by which the mass of such papers has become less than it was at the time I first made their acquaintance.

Indeed, the Rev. Dr. Allen assures me that he has not yet come across any such bundled or detached papers of originals or quasi-originals, at all. But, as he also informs me that he has been desired by your Excellency to make a particular communication upon the actual condition of the Archives, (to which I have suggested that he should add an enumeration or some estimate of the quantity and character of the Documents that exist,) I need not dwell further on this topic, here.

As to the use to be made of those papers after they shall have been recovered and suitably arranged, it would be premature to speak now. Other States and Nations have uniformly found it advisable to make their contents public in some convenient way; and different ways have been adopted at different times, and in various places. It is now under consideration in England, as to what would be the most suitable method there; in connexion with which topic, I have the honor to transmit a printed letter, which was communicated to me by Sir Francis Palgrave, the Deputy-Master of the Rolls, whom I had occasion to converse with during the examinations I was making.

At present, I believe the actual steps in that Country are confined to the publication of the Calendars of the various Documents; with the view, I suppose, of ultimately taking the advice of scholars, as to the mode of selection, etc. of those Documents which deserve publication in

extenso. And in illustration of this point also, I have the honor of transmitting to your Excellency, to be deposited in the State Library, four volumes of what are termed Domestic Calendars, from 1603 to 1626, which were presented to me through the courtesy of the Foreign Office; but which I consider should belong properly to the State I represented. There are two other volumes in continuation which I shall shortly receive, and to which I shall give the same destination.

Distinction is made in the epithet between those Documents which are Domestic and others which, like those that concern Maryland, would be termed Colonial Calendars. Finding that the State Paper Office was confining itself entirely to the former class, and not seeing the propriety of the same work of examination and calendaring with regard to the latter in which I had a concern, being done over twice, I took occasion to propose in the very outset, that a Calendar of all the Maryland-papers should be forthwith set about under the authority of the Office, and that a copy of it should be communicable to the State of Maryland, upon its bearing a fair proportion of the expense—which I offered to meet on my own responsibility. But it is one of the features (and, not seldom, a most valuable feature) in English methods of doing business, to be averse to changing any part of a plan which has been adopted after consideration. And this habitual conservatism, as well as perhaps some local and temporary convenience of the force at disposal of the Office itself, prevented the proposition from being acceded to; though it was admitted by the Deputy-Master of the Rolls, that had such a proposal been made earlier, it would probably have led to the making out of the Domestic and Colonial Calendars, co-temporaneously.

The nearer acquaintance which I afterwards had with the Documents themselves, would, if it had existed at the time, have furnished me with a stronger argument in behalf of such co-temporaneous prosecution, than any which I was then able to urge. The discrimination in the actual partition of the two classes of papers, has not been (perhaps could not be) exercised with the precision that enables either to stand distinctly and alone. Some of the papers that are now ranged under the Colonial head are important in their relations to the so-called Domestic documents; while divers classed under this latter, are absolutely indispensable for us to have in completing our own collections.

From some correspondence had since my return, I incline to believe that there would be a greater disposition to adopt the method I had the

honor to suggest, were it to be again proposed: but I do not see any necessity for renewing it at present. Our own course appears very clear and easy, viz. to compare the Lists of what we have, with what exists elsewhere, so as to ascertain what we have not; and then to proceed with supplying our deficiencies by selecting, in order, those whose titles indicate them to be of the greatest importance; and so on, in our convenience, until we shall have collected all. It might be advisable, if it shall be found not to involve too serious an expenditure, to print the Calendar of papers which we already have—a step that would materially facilitate and economise their subsequent arrangement.

Such are the details which appear proper to be reported to you, Sir, as to what has been done in the matter committed to my Agency, and such the suggestions in relation to what remains to be done. Should these last receive, as I hope they may, the approbation of your Excellency and of the General Assembly, I need only add that I am ready to continue the same gratuitous co-operation as heretofore in giving them effect.

I have the honor to offer assurances of the respect with which I remain

Your Excellency's

Most obedient servant,

J. H. Alexander.

Baltimore, 16 *December*, 1859.

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